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Conference on Forgiveness in International Politics: An Alternative Road to Peace

PAS Abidjan organized a conference based on the Nouveaux Horizons title '*Forgiveness in International Politics: An alternative Road to Peace*' on January 30, 2008. This was the opportunity to gather more than 80 contacts to discuss about this timely issue of forgiveness, crucial to Cote d'Ivoire who is in the process of post war national reconciliation and peace-building. The participants included representatives from the Ministry of Reconciliation and the Ministry of Communication, former ministers, religious leaders, lawyers, the Women Leaders Caucus, Human Rights activists, media professionals, and the Civil Society.

Following the welcome address from the DCM, Cynthia Akuetteh, the representative of the Minister of Reconciliation took the floor to open the conference. He pointed out that Ivorian leaders have chosen to set out upon the path of forgiveness to achieve peace, thus avoiding revenge and punishment. Panellists underlined the very importance of this book that provides useful insights on conflict resolution and the process of reconciliation. They explained the difference between the concepts of justice and forgiveness. Justice demands truth-telling, evidence, the healing of memories, victims' rights, and punishment of the offender, whereas forgiveness demands repentance and remission of the offence.

Participants applauded this conference said to be highly important and appropriate for Ivorian leaders. They agreed on the concept of forgiveness as a powerful tool to non-violent conflict settlement, regional stability, and social unification. They believe that this specific book will more inspire decision makers in their efforts to reconcile the Ivorian populations. However, they are aware of the difficulty to implement such a project. The event was extensively covered by print press and broadcasted by the national television. Congratulations phone calls and e-mails showed the relevance of this book program.

Read the pictorial history on next page



*DCM Cynthia Akuetteh
introducing the program*



*Mr. Koffi Dadier the Representative of the
Minister of the National Reconciliation.*



*Articulated panelists: Mr. Degny-Segui,
Honoré Guié and N'Gouin-Clain
(From Left to Right)*



Partial view of the participants



*Partial view of participants:
religious leaders*



Active participation of the Audience



*PAO Sharon White delivering the
closing words*



*PAO Sharon White interacting with Former
Minister Assana Sangaré an influential
parliamentarian*

Religious outreach with the National Islamic Council January 23, 2008

More than 75 religious leaders, Imams, presidents of the National Islamic Council, followed the presentation of the IRC services and programs and IIP resources in Arabic and French on Wednesday January 23 in the Aghien Mosque of Abidjan.

After the welcome remarks expressed by Imam Dosso, a former International Visitor, PAO Sharon White opened the program and welcomed the participants. The IRC staff demonstrated the English and Arabic version of the new IIP site America.gov. IRO Anne Johnson, made an important contribution. She showcased numerous sites and resources on the Islam available online. PAO Sharon White and Omer Gonne, the IT Administrator, shared the floor to answer a few questions regarding the impact of the Islamic community on the political process in the United States as well as the social integration of the Islamic Community in the United States.

Imam Idriss Koudouss, the President of the National Islamic Council in his address, thanked the US Embassy, cited all the productive and major action the Embassy did toward the Islamic Community in Cote d'Ivoire, the exchange programs and the celebration of Muslim holidays such as the If Tar dinners. He showed how much he personally appreciate the President Bush messages to the Islamic community. PAO Sharon White presented 164 documents including the IIP coffers in Arabic, a set of Nouveaux Horizons books in French, copies of the IIP publication *Muslim Lives in America*, and the CDROM USInfo. Iman Koudous frankly acknowledged that it is the first time in 15 years, for the Institution to receive a large donation from an Embassy. This memorable outreach program is a true expression of sharing values and fostering mutual understanding.

The national television and print press positively reported the event. The National radio broadcasted the PAO Sharon White and the President of the Islamic National Council, interview.



Partial view of the participants.



IRO Anne Johnson, Imam Koudous and PAO S. White introducing the program (from left to right)



Mrs. Coulibaly Oumou the new IRC Technician presenting the resources



Mr. Gonne the IT Administrator, sharing his experience as a young Muslim in the US.



Mr. Meyrieux the American Corner Coordinator marketing the Corner's services



Partial view of the audience



Imam Koudouss, President of the National Council, delivering the closing words



PAO Sharon presenting a sample of IIP Resources and ARS Books

Reaching Young Muslims

On Wednesday January 23rd, PAS Abidjan held a religious outreach session at the *Lycee Confessionnel Privee Islamique de Marcory*. The PAO opened the session by expressing her gratitude to the participants for their massive participation to this session. The IRC staff presented the products, services and resources available in the IRC. We were honored by the presence of Anne Johnson, the visiting IRO who made an important contribution. She showcased numerous sites and resources on Islam, available online in the United States universities. The student advisor who was part of the team provided useful information about studying in the USA. The students and Arabic teachers showed a lot of interests to the activity. In her speech, Mrs. Doukouré, the Director of the school thanked the Mission for the visit to this Islamic school and also for the opportunity to have access to available resources in both Arabic and French.



PAO Sharon White, Mrs. Doukoure and IRO Anne Johnson (From left to Right)



Partial view of the participants



Mr. Tcetché the Student Advisor, during his presentation



IRCT Oumou Coulibaly, Presenting the IRC resources



PAO Sharon White addressing to students, teachers and heads of the Islamic Secondary School of Abidjan.

DVC WITH WASHINGTON DC: 'OUR ICEBERG IS MELTING'

Twenty two Local Employee Staff members plus an American officer participated to the DVC based on a famous management book 'Our Iceberg is Melting: Changing and Succeeding Under Any Conditions'. Our guest speaker was Barbara Conaty, a regional Information Resource Officer based in Washington DC. The Deputy Public Affairs Officer, Etta Toure opened the session and introduced the speaker. Mrs. Conaty highlighted the eight step process of successful change:

- to create a sense of urgency,
- pull together the guiding team,
- develop the change vision and strategy
- communicate and understanding
- empower the others to act
- produce short-term wins
- don't let up, press harder and faster after the first success
- create a new culture.

Five panelists all Local Employee Staff members, shared their own experiences and showed how useful this program was in their lives and recommended this book to parents, teachers and supervisors. A participant, who is leaving the Embassy on June, came after the program to acknowledge that this video conference came on the right time to deal with new challenges. Participants unanimously recommended that a Local Employee Staff in a strategic position needs a coach or a mentor to help implement some necessary changes in the work environment. In order to have tangible results in any change, American officers must get involved in such a program.

We hope this program will contribute to improve management in our work place. As a result, the DPAO reported the management office, the LES concerns about American Officers participation to such programs designed to reinforce staff professional capacities, leadership and communication between local employees and American Officers. Meeting and other conferences will be organized to discuss about major issues related to work environment.



Caption

- 1 – Mrs. Barbara Conaty, the speaker
 2 – PDAO Etta Toure and the Moderator, Jean-Pierre Dibangoup
 3 – Partial view of the participants
 4 – Mrs. Elias – Panelist
 5 – Mr. Francis Lahai - Panelist

Cross-Cultural Research Program

Department of Sociology of the University of Cocody

On January 17, 2008, PAS staff went out to reach the heads and graduate students from the Department of Sociology of the University of Cocody for a Cross-Cultural Research program designed to reinforce participants' research skills. The session started with the welcome address by Dr. Toure-Diabate, a teacher, on the behalf of the head of the Department. Then followed the DPAO, Mrs. Etta Toure, who delivered the opening remarks pointing out the importance of fostering mutual understanding through such a program.

The IRC staff members presented through a powerpoint, the online as well as print resources available for our target audience composed of 300 attendees. The IRCD presentation focused on our famous Nouveaux Horizons collection. She delivered a lecture on 'Winning'. She lively showed and commented slides on 'the following books: The Contrarian's Guide to Leadership, and 'The Elements of Teaching' which certainly contribute to readers' personal or leadership development, career building, and success in life. Participants were amazed to discover the abundant and accurate information resources they can get access through the IRC of the American Embassy.

PAS presented Nouveaux Horizons books, the InfoUSA CD-ROM, and the IIP E-journal on 'World Youth building a Future, to the institution leaders who promised to make a good use of them. Dr. Toure-Diabaté in her closing words extended her gratitude to the American Mission who endeavors to perpetuate the good relationship between the two countries.



A view of the participants

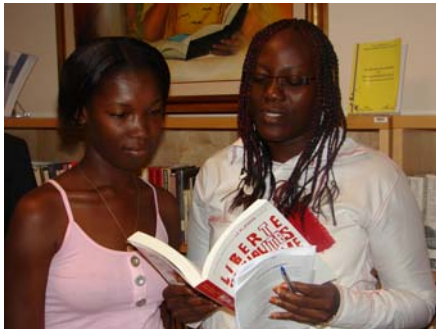


DPAO Etta Toure and Dr. Toure the head
of the Department of Sociology
(From Left to right)

Immersion program with the NGO ‘Justice Pour Tous’

PAS staff welcomed 40 members of the NGO ‘Justice Pour Tous’ (Justice for All) for an immersion session, on Wednesday January 16, 2008. The first part of the program dealt with a powerpoint presentation promoting the IRC online and print resources, programs, services as well as IIP homepage. The IRCD demonstrated web sites and databases related to the audience interest that is to say law and justice. Our famous Nouveaux Horizons collection captured their attention, mainly, ‘The Contrarian’s Guide to Leadership’. Participants were pleased to discover the mine of information resources available for them. The second part consisted in a guided tour of the IRC to allow participants use materials and practice online research. They appreciated the session and applied for the IRC membership card.

Image on the Immersion Session



Participants browsing and reading



Participants in the IRC Reading room



The IRC Assistant, demonstrating the IIP online resources



Deep interest for the IIP webchat station

Reaching the National Police Academy

On January 15th PAS organized a productive immersion session with forty trainee *gendarme* officers and their supervisors. This session started with DPAO Etta Toure welcome words followed by the OPSCO, Willie Gunn's presentation on the American military career and his professional experience as Foreign Service Officer. He gave the chance to participants to ask questions. It resulted in a fruitful exchange which provided them with more information on their American counterpart.

The IRC staff presented the Embassy, its role and importance for the host country, with emphasis on various services available online with a special focus on the IIP publication on 'Defence and Democracy'.

During the guided tour of the IRC, participants were impressed to discover authoritative and various resources available for their researches. They took the opportunity to practice online research, browse through the IRC print collections, and sign up for membership cards. This prolific visit will generate future activities.



Caption

- 1 – OPSCO Willie Gunn and DPAO Etta Toure
- 2 – OPSCO Willie Gunn, delivering his speech
- 3 – An attentive audience
- 4 – Browsing the IRC collection - 5 –Discussing with Lieutenant Acafou - 6 – Online research
- 7 – Book presentation by OPSCO Willie Gunn to Captain Aïdara Ibrahim – 8 - Group photo